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TAGS: [PREL](#) [KINP](#) [IR](#) [IS](#) [AS](#)

SUBJECT: ISRAELI AMBASSADOR: RUDD FIRM ON IRAN

REF: A. A) 07 CANBERRA 1738

[1](#)B. B) CANBERRA 738

Classified By: Economic Counselor Edgard Kagan for reasons 1.4 (b/d).

#### Summary

[1](#)1. (C/NF) The Israeli Ambassador believes PM Rudd is very concerned about the Iranian nuclear program and firm in his desire to do whatever possible to signal Australia's opposition to Tehran's nuclear ambitions. Rudd is worried that the window for a "diplomatic solution" is closing and that lack of progress could lead Israel to feel forced to use "non-diplomatic means," according to Ambassador Yuval Rotem. Iran has retaliated for perceived Australian slights by taking steps to make the day-to-day functioning of the Australian Embassy in Tehran more difficult, which has constrained Rudd's desire for symbolic measures to signal Canberra's concern about the nuclear program. The Israelis believe Rudd is very firm in his overall support for Israel. End Summary.

[1](#)2. (C/NF) Australian PM Kevin Rudd remains deeply concerned about the Iranian nuclear program and Iran's threat to international stability, according to Israeli Ambassador Yuval Rotem. Noting that Rudd had taken a very strong stance on Iran while Opposition Leader, including calling for Iranian President Ahmadinejad to be prosecuted by the International Criminal Court for his calls for the destruction of Israel, Rotem told Econcouns July 21 that he is confident that the PM's views on Iran remain very firm. Saying he has discussed Iran with Rudd on several occasions in the past few months, Rotem said that the PM is "deeply worried" that Iran's intransigence means that the window for a diplomatic solution is closing and that Israel may feel forced to use "non-diplomatic" means.

#### Retaliation Against Australian Embassy in Tehran

[1](#)3. (C/NF) Asked how Rudd's views on Iran have manifested themselves, Rotem said that Iran has reacted to the PM's statements by taking "retaliatory measures" against the

Australian Embassy in Tehran. These measures make it harder for the Embassy to conduct its day-to-day business, according to Rotem. He said that DFAT Secretary Michael l'Estrange and ONA Director General Peter Varghese had met several times to convince the PM to think through the consequences of his rhetoric on Iran. Though frustrated, Rudd accepts that he must "keep his powder dry" in order to have the maximum flexibility to take "serious steps," according to Rotem.

#### Israeli Views on Australia's Global PR Role on Iran

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14. (C/NF) Rotem said that Israel sees Australia as playing an important role in the "global PR battle" on Iran because PM Rudd is viewed favorably by the "European Left," many of whom are skeptical about taking a tough line towards Tehran. Rotem said Israeli Embassies in Europe have reported that Rudd's policies are receiving a surprising amount of attention, particularly because of his withdrawal of Australian troops from Iraq. The Israelis hope that Rudd's position on Iran may help persuade skeptical Europeans, as well as help reinforce the need for a tough line on Iran by other countries.

#### Rudd Continues Strong Support for Israel

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15. (C/NF) Commenting that Israel had appreciated the very firm support from former PM Howard as well as FM Alexander Downer, Rotem said that Israeli officials would normally have been concerned at the prospect of their defeat by the Labor Party. However, this was not the case because Rudd had long gone out of his way to stress his strong commitment to Israel and its appreciation for its security concerns. Rotem said that he has had excellent access to Rudd and noted that the PM has taken a strong interest in even minor issues involving Israel. In that regard, Rotem noted that this has created a sometimes confusing situation where the PM's Office gets involved in routine matters that are normally handled at the working level within the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT). He said that calls to DFAT are often returned by the PM's Foreign Policy Advisor, Gary Quinlan. Commenting that DFAT officials are very frank in expressing their annoyance with the PM's micromanaging of foreign policy issues, Rotem laughingly said that "while I understand their point of view, how can I complain about having that kind of attention from the PM."

#### Comment

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16. (C/NF) During his first meeting with the Ambassador immediately after his election, Rudd described Ahmedinejad as a "loathsome individual on every level" and said that the Iranian President's anti-semitism "turns my stomach." He noted that he knew enough about the complexities of Iranian politics to understand that it was critical to ensure that any action we take must serve to weaken Ahmedinejad, rather than entrench him (ref A). Australia has also supported U.S. efforts on Iran, most recently on preventing uranium shipments to Iran (ref B).8

#### Bio Note

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17. (C/NF) Having arrived in Australia in July 2007, Rotem has previously served as the Israeli Consul General in Los Angeles as well as Chief of Staff to Foreign Minister David Levy from 1996-1998. Before that, he was foreign policy advisor to Foreign Ministers Shimon Peres and Ehud Barak, after having served at the Israeli UN Mission in New York.